

VZCZCXR08758  
RR RUEHPA  
DE RUEHOS #0029/01 0351144  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 041144Z FEB 08  
FM AMCONSUL LAGOS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9699  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 9436  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 0170  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 000029

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA, DS/IP/AF, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/OSAC  
OSLO FOR HELENA SCHRADER  
DOE FOR GPERSON, CAROLYN GAY  
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS  
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS  
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER  
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD  
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART  
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT  
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER  
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL SENV NI

SUBJECT: NIGER DELTANS PREDICT MORE OF THE SAME IN 2008

REF: A. ABUJA 23  
B. LAGOS 11

Classified By: Ambassador Robin R. Sanders for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Niger Delta ethnic leaders, government officials and civil society members told visiting African Affairs Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) Todd Moss and the Ambassador that they remain hopeful that a permanent peace can be negotiated, but feel manipulated by the greed and hypocrisy of federal officials. The Government of Nigeria (GON) has little interest in attaining peace, despite Vice President Goodluck Jonathan's assumption of the role of chief negotiator. The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has been ineffective in developing the region. These contacts said selective enforcement and weak penalties by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) are scant deterrent to corruption. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) During a dinner in Lagos on January 27, DAS Todd Moss and the Ambassador met with a group of Niger Delta representatives including former Delta State Senator Temi Harriman, Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) President Chris Ekiyor, Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) President Ledum Mitee, Dimieari Von Kemedi Director of the Bayelsa State eGovernance and Due Process office, Urhobo scholar and NGO member Chief Imo Joe Otite, human rights activist Patrick Naagbanton, Delta State Development Director General Godwin Akpobire, and Bayo Olowoshile from the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Sector Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN). Lagos Consul General and PolOff (note taker) also attended.

-----  
Does GON Want to Solve the Niger Delta Crisis?  
-----

¶3. (C) Chris Ekiyor, President of the Ijaw Youth Council

(which is engaged in negotiations with the Federal Government on behalf of Ijaw youth), said the Government of Nigeria (GON) is only half-heartedly engaging militants who are fast losing faith in the negotiation process. Ekiyor discussed Vice President Goodluck Jonathan's role in the negotiation process as proof that the GON has little interest in attaining peace, largely because so many in power benefit from gains ill-gotten in the Niger Delta. Jonathan becomes "very emotional" when discussing the region and Ekiyor fears any agreement ultimately reached will be discounted by others as evidence of Jonathan's favoritism toward the region.

Similarly, if Jonathan fails to secure peace, those benefiting from the Delta's turmoil will crow that peace in the region is impossible, Ekiyor reasoned. (Note: Vice President Goodluck Jonathan replaced Senator David Brigidi as the GON's primary negotiator in early January after a deterioration of the ceasefire in Port Harcourt, Rivers State (Reftel). On January 19 Jonathan and Ijaw negotiators agreed to break for two weeks to develop new positions for further negotiations. An Ijaw contact told Poloff in a separate conversation there is a "peace campaign" in the camps and militants should have their position by January 30. End Note.)

¶4. (C) In talks with Jonathan in mid-January, Ekiyor emphasized that Ijaws need to see honest government commitment to the negotiation process through 1) the unconditional release of all Niger Delta political prisoners; 2) more transparent/equitable spending on the Niger Delta; 3) immediate job creation and development; 4) inclusion of Ijaw youth in political affairs; and 5) the adoption of a negotiation intermediary. The adoption of an intermediary is important, Ekiyor commented, because there can be no negotiation between unequal powers, and militant youth are

LAGOS 00000029 002 OF 003

not equal to the GON.

¶5. (C) Ledum Mitee, President of the Movement for the survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), agreed with Ekiyor that GON officials do not want to improve the Niger Delta. Mitee said he provided a Rivers State government official with a suggested road map for peace in the state, which the official later admitted to having lost. He also criticized the structure of the military Joint Task Force (JTF) for allowing too many rogue commanders in the creeks to determine their own targets which have included militants, whole villages, bunkering, and participating in oil bunkering. Militants and the JTF sometimes collaborate on, sometimes battle over oil bunkering and control of the creeks, he said.

¶6. (SBU) Ekiyor, with the interest of other participants, inquired about AFRICOM. However, following the DAS's explanation, our guests appeared to understand that AFRICOM does not entail U.S. military action in Nigeria. Rather, many repeated that it represents an internal organizational restructuring; despite this, someone later joked the U.S. Marines would surely invade the Niger Delta.

-----  
NDDC Not Effective in Developing the Delta  
-----

¶7. (SBU) Participants told DAS Moss that the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) is entirely controlled by the Federal Government: NDDC leaders are appointed by the president, the NDDC board of directors are all political appointees, and the body's oversight committees fall under the presidency. They stressed that NDDC is not designed to fulfill its mandate. Despite having received billions of naira since its inception in 2001 and the adoption in 2006 of the NDDC Master Plan, the organization still appears to be only at stage one of its development plan (Ref B), chided Ledum Mitee.

-----  
Selective Enforcement, Weak Penalties Assure

¶ 18. (C) Nigeria is unlikely to improve over the next year unless there are significant changes to the current electoral system, according to Temi Harriman, former Senator of Delta State. Electoral reforms and cosmetic makeovers do not sufficiently address deep-rooted problems, like those demonstrated by the flawed elections presided over by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). While Harriman praised the Supreme Court's rulings on the elections, she commented they have been too few in number and have not prevented election tribunals from doing "equity" rather than "justice" in several states. She cited as an example the court's substitution of Rotimi Amaechi as Governor of Rivers State, despite his never having appeared on the ballot. (Note: Harriman was a former PDP member and switched to the Action Congress (AC) party with former VP Atiku. End note.) In response to the Ambassador's question as to whether there would be violence if the Presidential elections are overturned, Harriman said no, but all the guests seemed to agree that new elections must be held for the sake of legitimacy. However, the guests then disagreed on whether the electoral law and current electoral framework need to be adjusted or simply properly adhered to.

¶ 19. (C) Harriman judged the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) indictment of former Delta State Governor James Ibori far too weak. He is charged with stealing naira 10 billion (USD 85 million), while everyone knows he stole

LAGOS 00000029 003 OF 003

upwards of naira 150 or 200 billion (USD 1.3-1.6 billion), she said. If convicted, Ibori may only spend two years in jail, an insufficient penalty to dissuade others from siphoning off such large sums, Harriman reasoned. She also accused the EFCC of selective prosecution which sends mixed messages to sitting governors.

¶ 10. (C) Dimieari Von Kemedi, Head of the Bayelsa State Due Process and eGovernance office, told the group his office is working with Revenue Watch International to bring due process to Bayelsa State. Ekiyor, Mitee and Chief Imo Joe Otite (Chairman of the Delta State Management and Mitigation Regional Council) discounted the need for due process, claiming that it would not solve the problem of corruption. Ekiyor questioned the value of due process if the individual responsible for reviewing contracts can be bribed to stamp his seal of approval?

¶ 11. (U) This cable was cleared by DAS Moss and Embassy Abuja.  
BLAIR